

PUBLIC SAFETY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

(San Diego Police)

Introduction

The Police Department experienced significant budget cuts in Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004 because of the City's fiscal crisis. Since mid-Fiscal Year 2003 and continuing into Fiscal Year 2004, the Department has significantly reduced expenditures by curtailing non-essential purchases; suspending travel, training, and equipment purchases; and reducing contracts. Vacant sworn and civilian positions have remained unfilled. The Department has used salary savings from unfilled positions to cover expenses in overtime, special pay, data processing, and equipment categories. Additionally, the Department has used a large amount of non-General Fund revenue sources, including grants, to keep expenditures within budget. Attrition (an average of seven officers per month), reductions and vacancies in the civilian ranks, and increasing crime (an average 5.7 increase in reported crime since 2000) have stressed the Department.

Impacts

Staffing shortages and the increased demand for police services has affected every unit and function in the Department:

- Increased response times for all but emergency calls for service: the average response time for Priority 3 calls (cold crimes) increased 30%, from 59 minutes in 2002 to 77 minutes in 2003.
- Increased and different demands for police services in response to crime, traffic, and development: homicides increased to 65 in 2003 from 47 in 2002; detectives were pulled from other crimes to handle a double digit increase in identity theft without an increase in personnel; and the opening of Petco Park, large-scale events, and residential growth in downtown San Diego.
- Increased down time for officers because of unscheduled repairs to aged police vehicles
- Decreased opportunity for officers to solve and prevent crime problems, resulting in reactive policing of crime incidents instead of proactive or preventative approaches to crime problems.
- Increased gang-related activity and crime in the San Diego's Southeastern and beach neighborhoods.
- Decreased ability to provide proactive police services, such as canceling the Elementary Safety School Program, a comprehensive safety and drug prevention program that replaced D.A.R.E., at 31 elementary schools and classes at several other schools
- Decreased ability to solve or clear crime cases: the Department's average clearance or solve rate for index crimes fell from 20.7% in 2000 to 15.4% in 2003.
- Sworn personnel are forced to take time away from police work to perform clerical and other support duties because of the shortage of civilian workers.

Personnel

Sworn

The Department's top priority is hiring replacement officers and needed civilian workers. Since FY 2002 the Department has lost more officers than it has hired. There have been no San Diego police recruits in the regional academies since January 2003. Seventy-four of the Department's 2,104 budgeted sworn positions are currently vacant. Sworn staffing is actually much lower, because in addition to these vacancies, more than 75 personnel are unavailable because of military leave, Civil Service leave, and medical leave.

From 1999 to 2003, the Department lost 315 sworn personnel, for an average of 63 per year. Based on an analysis of sworn employees scheduled to retire in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan for the next five years and attrition data from the past five years, the Department projects that it will lose an average of 86 sworn officers per year between 2004 and 2008. Replacement officers are needed so that each area command can meet minimum staffing requirements and provide basic police services.

As the spreadsheet indicates, the Department has an immediate need for additional officers to staff the planned Northwestern Area Station and to expand its number of Homeless Outreach & Psychiatric Emergency Response Teams and Canine Teams. Expanding these teams would fulfill recommendations of the Use of Force Task Force Committee to provide officers with less-lethal force alternatives and to address the special needs of the homeless and mentally ill populations.

Civilian

Hiring civilians to fill vacancies is critical to returning sworn officers to police duties and staffing the Communications Division to handle an expected influx of cellular 9-1-1 calls. Civilians work in all areas of the Department and provide critical support for officers in communications, crime lab, property room, records, fiscal, payroll, supply, auto maintenance, crime analysis, data services, and clerical services.

During budget constraints experienced during the last several years and in the early 1990's, the Department was required to make significant reductions in its civilian ranks. In FY 1992 and FY 1993, civilian staff was cut 80.75 positions. In FY 2004 civilian staff was cut by an additional 36.75 positions. Another 80 positions remained in the budget but were held vacant. The funds for these positions ultimately were cut from the Department's budget. In all, a total of \$5,689,000 was cut from the FY 2004 budget for civilian staff. At 644 budgeted positions in FY 2004, civilian staffing is at the lowest point in ten years, despite increases in sworn staffing and the demand for police services. With civilians accounting for 24% of its workforce, the Department has one of the lowest percentages of civilians of any major California city, with one of the lowest ratios of civilians to sworn, at 1:3.

Cutting a civilian position does not eliminate the civilian's workload. Sworn officers have been called upon to perform the duties of the vacant civilian position: officers and detectives in every unit are spending less time on police work and more time answering the phones, typing crime reports and responses to route slips, and processing subpoenas. A qualified and properly classified civilian, rather than an officer who has been trained in public safety, should perform these functions.

In 2002, the Department studied the number of sworn officers performing the work of civilians in administrative position. Approximately 80 positions were identified as potential candidates for "civilianization." The Department has attempted to replace the sworn officers in these positions with civilian staff, allowing officers to fill much-needed roles in patrol and investigations. Civilians have replaced sworn in four of the 80 identified positions, but the classifications were not added to the budget. Until the Department can afford to hire civilians, conversion of the remaining positions is on hold.

As the spreadsheet indicates, the Department has specific critical and long-term needs for replacement and additional civilian personnel. The Crime Laboratory needs to make permanent two grant-funded criminalist positions so that important analysis of evidence in violent crimes can continue after funding for these positions ends in FY 2005. The Crime Lab also needs additional Forensic Specialists and Latent Print Examiners because of crime increases and the need to proactively match fingerprints in unsolved cases. Three additional Crime Analysts are needed to serve patrol and investigations in the analysis of crime series, community problems, crime mapping, as well as provide crime information to the public and other City departments through the Department's web page. The Special Events Unit needs additional budgeted Special Event Traffic Controllers to manage traffic stemming from the new PETCO Park. The Mounted Unit needs an additional Stable Attendant to provide seven-day care of the Department's horses to free up officers to perform police work. An additional six positions are needed in Information Technology to implement and support the Department's automated systems, such as Automated Field Reporting; wireless dispatch through Mobile Computer Terminals; the Criminal Records Management System, which provides for the electronic filing and storage of crime and arrest reports; and Computer Aided Dispatch of calls for police services.

Training

Even though funding for training has been suspended, the need for training in several specialized areas remains constant. The Crime Lab's DNA specialists need annual training to maintain competency and certification, as do the Automotive Maintenance technicians. The Narcotics Section needs annual training in narcotics identification and interdiction to keep pace with the growth of "designer drugs." The Mounted Unit needs annual training for officers and horses to maintain proficiency in crowd control and critical incident management.

Information Technology

Information technology is expected to play a key role in the Department through 2010, as it has during the past ten years. A concerted effort is required in two areas—keeping the current

systems up-to-date and developing new applications. While automation maintenance and new development projects are costly, complex, and time consuming, they are absolutely critical for maximizing patrol officer and detective productivity and effectiveness. Information technology is especially crucial for this Department because of its low officer to resident ratio.

The information technology work of the last ten years has been based on automating paper-intensive processes and providing Department staff with access to a wide variety of Department, regional, state, and federal databases from one computer. It includes the development of automated crime and arrest reports (AFR), a system to route those reports through the various stages of approval, investigation, storage, and access (CRMS), as well as an enhanced automated dispatch system (CAD). The work also included developing new information databases for access to law enforcement data.

The long-range plan for automation through 2010 is to provide Department staff with access to complete information through one database search, thus eliminating the current user requirement for a variety of systems knowledge and reducing labor intensive support staff requirements. Advances in automation will continue to help maximize officer and detective productivity and assist in providing excellent customer service.

As the spreadsheet indicates, the Department's biggest information technology needs are funding for structural underfunding of operational costs, and replacing the obsolete Mobile Data Terminals with Mobile Computer Terminals, using wireless technology. Additionally, some off-site units, such as the Homeless Outreach Team, need computers and Local Area Network access to be able to communicate with the rest of the Department.

Supplies and Services

Suspending expenditures has diminished the Department's ability to provide basic equipment to its officers, resulting in an inability to perform basic police services. As the spreadsheet indicates, the Department needs range from ammunition to DNA equipment to replacement horses to tape recorders to bulletproof vests.

Fleet

With no funds for vehicle purchases in FY 2004, the Department experiences higher than normal expenses for vehicle repair, maintenance, and parts, as well as increased labor costs and down time for officers. By the end of FY 2004, 45% of the Department's mission vehicles will have more than 80,000 miles. As the spreadsheet indicates, the Department desperately needs to replace its aged fleet with new vehicles. Additionally, the Department needs support vehicles, such as vans for the Homeless Outreach Team so that officers can transport homeless individuals and their belongings.

The Department flies some of the oldest helicopters in United States law enforcement. The Air Support Unit's three Bell 206B Jet Rangers are 36, 29, and 10 years old, respectively. Because of the significant amount of special equipment needed for effective law enforcement, these

helicopters routinely fly near their maximum gross weight capacity. The fourth helicopter, a Bell 206L4 Long Ranger, is 10 years old. Although this helicopter is more powerful and capable than the Jet Ranger helicopters, it is louder and is the source of many of the unit's noise complaints from residents. The spreadsheet shows the cost of buying and properly equipping four new helicopters over the next four fiscal years.

Facilities

Regarding facilities, the funding level for deferred maintenance has allowed for only minimal repairs at the Department's high-use facilities, which require on-going renovations. The spreadsheet shows deferred maintenance and renovation needs at the area stations, ranging from replacing plumbing, overhauling heating and air conditioning systems, roof replacement, and parking lot repair. Failure to perform this work results in higher repair costs as the facilities and equipment begin to deteriorate. Additionally, health and safety issues might arise from trip hazards, indoor air quality, mold, and mildew. The Department also risks the possibility of having fines levied for violation of existing OSHA regulations and eventual closure of the facilities. Critical additional facilities needs include temporary and permanent storage, because the Department is fast running out of room to store impounded property; a fuel tank for Air Support; and replacement of 20-year-old "temporary" office quarters for the Mounted Unit.

Homeland Security

A new Police Operations Center is needed to meet identified space requirements. These include a back-up Communications facility, critical in the event of a catastrophic failure of the present dispatch system. This new Center could serve this purpose, or house a new primary Communications facility with the existing equipment designated as the back-up facility. This new Operations Center would also house specialized units and centralized investigative units, freeing space at Headquarters for technical support and reducing or eliminating the need for leased office space. Finally, it would provide permanent space for the Traffic Division, which is currently occupying modular office space adjacent to the Eastern Area Station.

Additionally, homeland security upgrades are needed at Department facilities. As the spreadsheet indicates, these measures include alarms, video surveillance equipment, parking lot modifications, metal detectors, fencing, and expansion of the electronic access system. In addition, the coordination of all security efforts, both operational and physical, should be under the purview of a Director of Security. This position does not currently exist within the Department. Police Departments are the backbone of national security in our own land. The security of its facilities must be of paramount concern.